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“THE WAY FORWARD”

Conclusions by Environment Ministers

at an informal meeting in

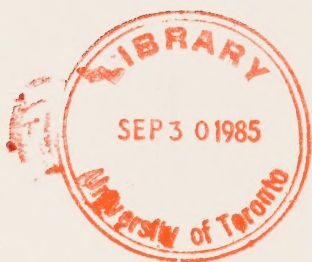
Lancaster House, London

on

17 December 1984

With a Foreword by

the Hon. Suzanne Blais-Grenier



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FOREWORD

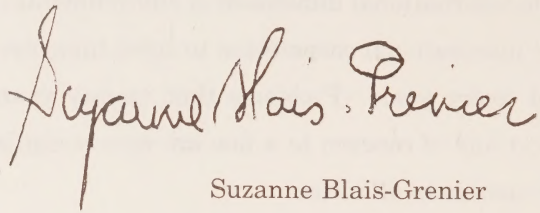
The international dimension of environmental problems and the need for international cooperation to solve them are becoming more apparent every year. Problems that twenty years ago were considered local and of concern to a few are now recognized as being global and of concern to all of us.

Further, the economic dimension of the environment is increasingly being recognized. To better manage our environment makes good economic sense since the resources of the environment are basic to our future economic development.

That the environment is both an economic and an international concern is the main thrust of the conclusions reached at a unique meeting of Environment Ministers of Summit countries which took place in London on December 17, 1984. The report of that meeting, which is published here, was presented to Heads of State or Government at the Bonn Economic Summit in May, 1985 for consideration. An excerpt from the Bonn Economic Declaration dealing with the environment is contained in the Annex.

The environment is not solely the concern of environmentalists and environment ministers. The environment is a shared responsibility. It belongs to each one of us: collectively we are responsible for its stewardship. The Economic Summit, in recognizing this principle,

has moved us another step towards our goal of sustainable economic development for ourselves and for our children.


A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Suzanne Blais-Grenier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Suzanne" being more prominent and the last name "Blais-Grenier" following in a similar style.

Suzanne Blais-Grenier

Minister of the Environment

"We recognize the international dimension of environmental problems and the role of environmental factors in economic development. We have invited Ministers responsible for environmental policies to identify areas for continuing co-operation in this field."

Extract from Communiqué from Heads of State or Government at the London Economic Summit, June 1984.



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CONCLUSIONS BY ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

LONDON, 17 DECEMBER 1984

"THE WAY FORWARD"

1. We have considered a number of areas of environmental concern in which international action is currently being undertaken. We have sought to identify themes which should be the mainspring of our continuing co-operation in the future.

2. At our informal meeting in London on December 17, 1984 we agreed that co-operation on individual issues of environmental concern has recently increased at all levels. We stress however that we must intensify this work and keep under continual review its principles and contents so as to ensure that both new and existing concerns are tackled, and changed perceptions are taken into account.

3. We recommend that the next Economic Summit should endorse the basic principle that the fundamental role of the environment should have a central place in our national and international policies. In this context we particularly stress the importance of good husbandry of natural resources to safeguard the basis of production of our economy and to conserve an environment worth living in.

4. We have made encouraging progress in reducing the pollution of air, water and the land. Nevertheless, in spite of these achievements, there is still a need for additional, more effective measures and further efforts. The conclusions reached in 1984 at major international and multilateral conferences with regard to environmental

issues should be rapidly put into effect. But we must not neglect the environmental problems which are less visible and more difficult to comprehend. In many cases the impacts of environmental pollution may be subtle, and may become obvious only in the long run. Moreover, the transfer of polluting substances from one sector of the environment to another creates new problems. This phenomenon should be given particular attention.

5. Other major problems are becoming increasingly acute in developing countries, and are in some cases influenced by our own policies. It is essential, in both developing and developed countries, to manage sustainable resources wisely, and to this end we emphasize that prevention of damage is better than repair. This principle is fully effective only in the framework of intensive international co-operation because many of these problems range far more widely than any one of our countries.

6. The appropriate international bodies are already dealing with subjects such as the use of toxic chemicals, management and disposal of hazardous wastes and marine pollution. But there is scope for more urgent and more effective co-operation. There has been a major improvement in international co-operation on air pollution control in the last few years; measures are being taken against acid rain in particular; it continues to be the subject of our intense efforts to ward off threatening dangers. Serious attention is being given to the depletion of the ozone layer and the increased build up of carbon dioxide. But, in the future, we need to analyze these three problems in their interdependence and, if necessary, devise alternative energy

policies. Similarly we believe that some problems arising out of modern agricultural practices need further study and should be treated on a broad international basis. In our own countries, notwithstanding systems for planning and regulating land use, more should be done to balance agricultural development with the sometimes conflicting needs of conserving our natural environment. In developing countries our aim in this respect should be to help to develop environmentally sound agricultural systems as a basis for sustainable development, and we should ensure that our own policies, wherever relevant, are consistent with this. We should give a lead to greater international co-operation on these issues.

7. The tragedy in India, which occurred only a few days before our meeting, emphasized the problems that can attend the transfer of the technology or of hazardous chemicals to developing countries. We are clear that this must be an area for continuing co-operation among our own and other industrialized nations in consultation with developing countries, and we welcome action being taken by OECD to draw up possible guidelines. One suggestion is that there might be jointly agreed government-industry monitoring teams to assess such operations. Further study and discussion are required, but we are clear that our efforts must be directed towards reinforcing the co-operation between developed and developing nations to the mutual benefit of both.

8. We believe more needs to be done to develop new concepts for careful environmental resource management. Risks have to be assessed by appropriate methods; the environmental impacts of our ac-

tions should be evaluated. Damage resulting from pollution should be analyzed as well as the costs of measures to protect the environment; the results should be taken into account when decisions on environmental policies are taken. Considerable progress has been made by OECD in evolving guidelines to help its members, and we believe that OECD remains the primary place for us to seek to develop further our understanding of the interaction between economics and environment. The forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the Environment Committee offers a major opportunity for a review of policy.

9. We also recognize that as industrialized countries we have experience and skills in the reduction of environmental pollution which should be shared with those who are only now confronting environmental problems. We acknowledge that the exploitation of the world's resources has to be sustainable in terms of both industry and trade. The need to conserve plant and animal species makes sense in economic as much as in ecological terms. The potential of the countries of the western world must continue to be used as an example for the conservation of an environment worth living in. We need to provide appropriate assistance to developing countries in managing their natural resources and development in a sustainable way. We also need to consider environmental impacts of our own activities in these countries and work actively with them on the wide range of environment/development issues.

10. We invite Heads of State or Government to affirm their commitment to the following main principles for continued co-operation.

(i) The resources of the environment constitute both the basis and the limits of economic development; and their wise management is one of the most important components of national and international policies.

(ii) Accordingly, environmental policy should be integrated fully into other policies. It should be considered as a fundamental factor when economic decisions are taken. In this context we stress the importance of sustainable development; prevention rather than cure; environmental impact assessment; setting environmental standards on the basis of best technology; and development of less polluting and more cost effective technologies, including those for controlling emissions at source.

(iii) The mechanisms of the market economy and the forces of competition should be harnessed to solve environmental problems effectively. Environmental protection is feasible only in co-operation with the economic and technological sectors and not in conflict with them.

(iv) The “polluter pays principle” is of key importance to ensuring that environmentally correct price and market signals are given, and should be developed and applied more widely.

11. We recommend specific action on the following issues:

(i) We should intensify co-operation, especially within OECD which we see as the primary instrument of industrialized coun-

tries for stimulating work on the relationship between the environment and the economy. In particular we look forward to the Ministerial meeting of OECD's Environment Committee in June 1985 where we will endeavour to secure agreement to progress in deciding the thrust of future environmental policy, including policies for natural resource management.

(ii) We recognize the major environmental problems faced by developing countries - including rapid population and urban growth, desertification, deforestation, and risks from hazardous chemicals and industrial installations. Our policies and interests interact with theirs and we must work with them for constructive programmes of environmentally sound development and the avoidance of environmental damage and disasters world-wide.

(iii) We should continue to co-operate actively, bilaterally and in appropriate international bodies, to solve our current preoccupations, notably acid deposition, the possible depletion of stratospheric ozone, the management of toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes, the prevention of freshwater and marine pollution, the conservation of flora, fauna and genetic resources, and the interactions of industrial, agricultural and conservation policies. But we must also be more forward-looking in addressing emerging environmental issues such as possible climatic changes resulting from human activities, the need to examine alternative energy strategies, and the environmental impact of new forms of industry including biotechnology. Most of these

will have to be tackled internationally and on a cross-sectoral basis.

12. We strongly advise against creating new institutions. The emphasis of our work is on continued and improved co-operation within the existing appropriate international bodies. We note the need for these bodies to have unambiguous priorities and effective channels for the implementation of decisions. We welcome the work of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development.

EXCERPT FROM THE BONN ECONOMIC DECLARATION
MAY 4, 1985

4. (E) Economic progress and the preservation of the natural environment are necessary and mutually supportive goals. Effective environmental protection is a central element in our national and international policies.

IV. Environmental Policies.

12. New approaches and strengthened international co-operation are essential to anticipate and prevent damage to the environment, which knows no national frontiers. We shall co-operate in order to solve pressing environmental problems such as acid deposition and air pollution from motor vehicles and all other significant sources. We shall also address other concerns such as climatic change, the protection of the ozone layer and the management of toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes. The protection of soils, fresh water and the sea, in particular of regional seas, must be strengthened.

13. We shall harness both the mechanisms of governmental vigilance and the disciplines of the market to solve environmental problems. We shall develop and apply the "polluter pays" principle more widely. Science and technology must contribute to reconciling environmental protection and economic growth.

14. Improved and internationally harmonized techniques of environmental measurement are essential. We invite the environmental experts of the technology, growth and employment work

group to consult with the appropriate international bodies about the most efficient ways for achieving progress in this field.

15. We welcome the contribution made by the environment ministers to closer international co-operation on environmental concerns. We shall focus our co-operation within existing international bodies, especially the OECD. We shall work with developing countries for the avoidance of environmental damage and disasters world-wide.

Canada